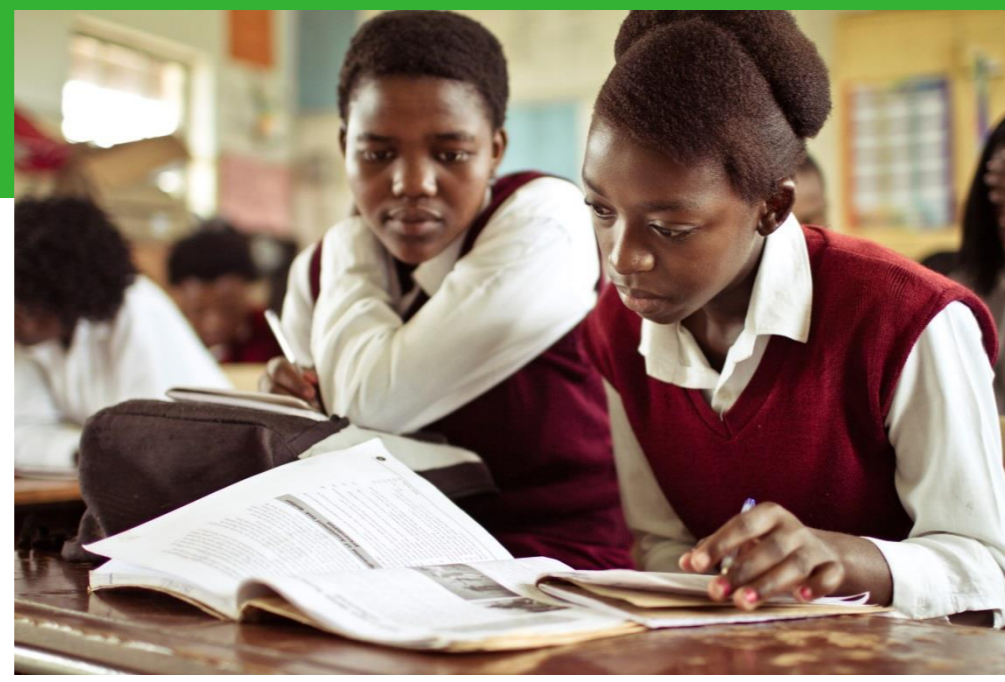


# Contexts of Reproduction: Gender Dynamics and Fertility in sub-Saharan Africa

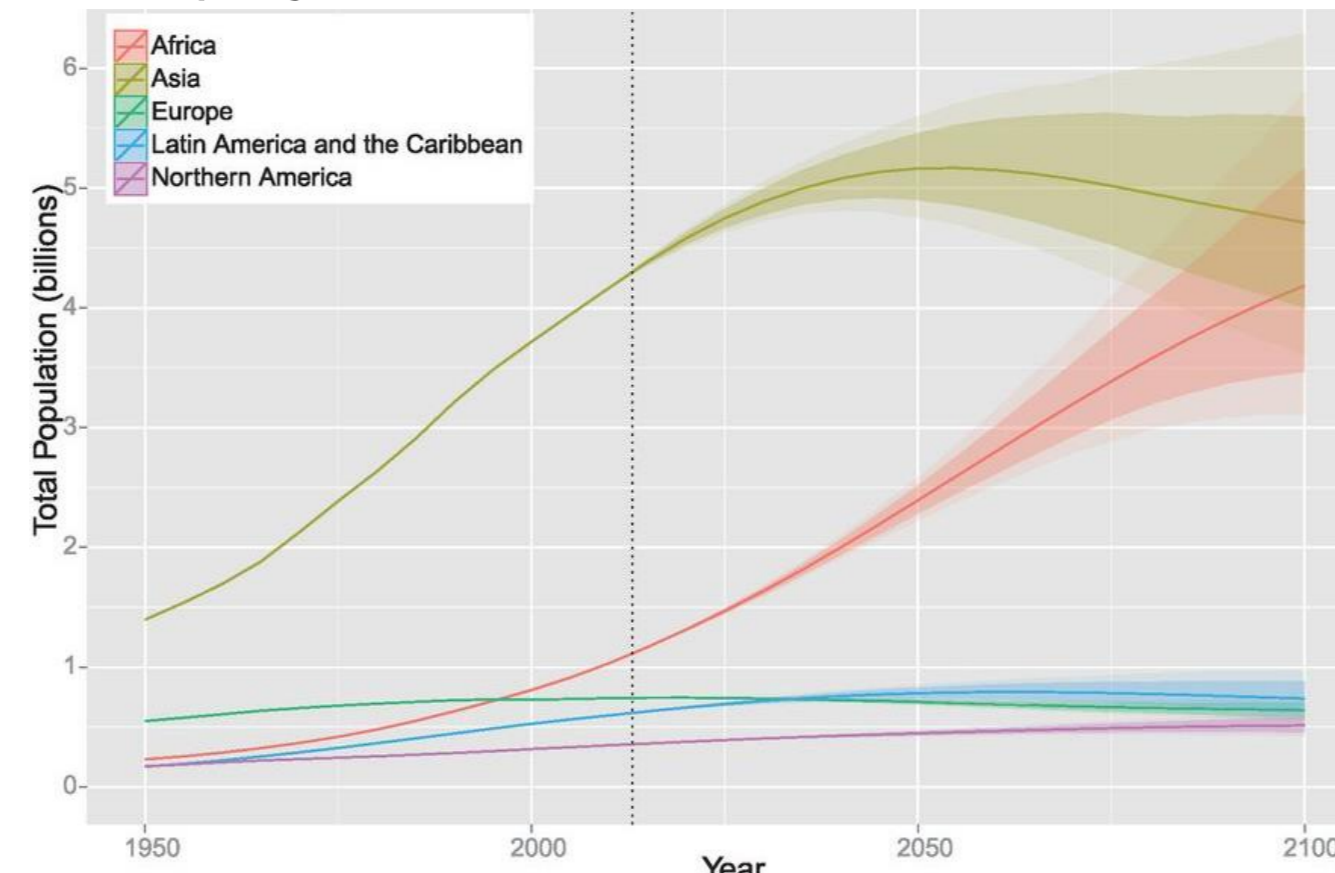
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## Introduction

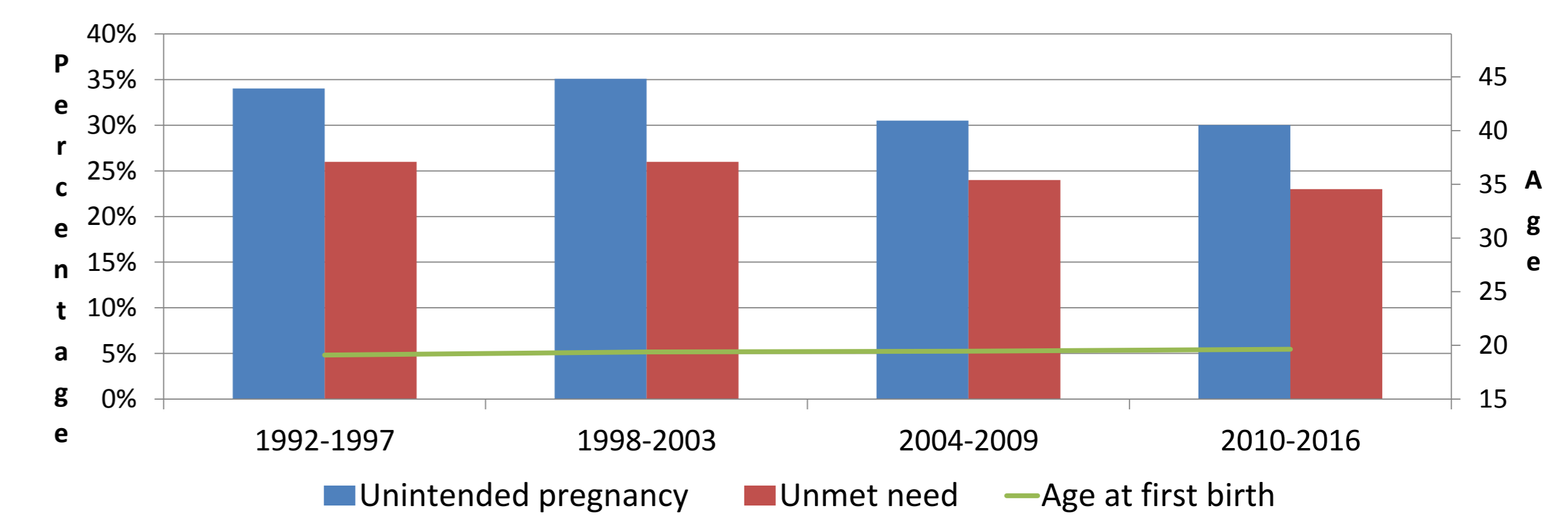
- The African population boom: *the societal issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*
- Persistently high rates of unintended pregnancy, unmet need, and low age at first birth
- Classic demographic theory poorly explains African fertility outcomes
- Need to consider the role of gender inequality (Dodoo & Frost 2008; Zuberi e.a. 2003)

**Figure 1.** Continental population estimates and projections, 1950-2100



## Results

**Figure 2.** Descriptive statistics of the dependent variables

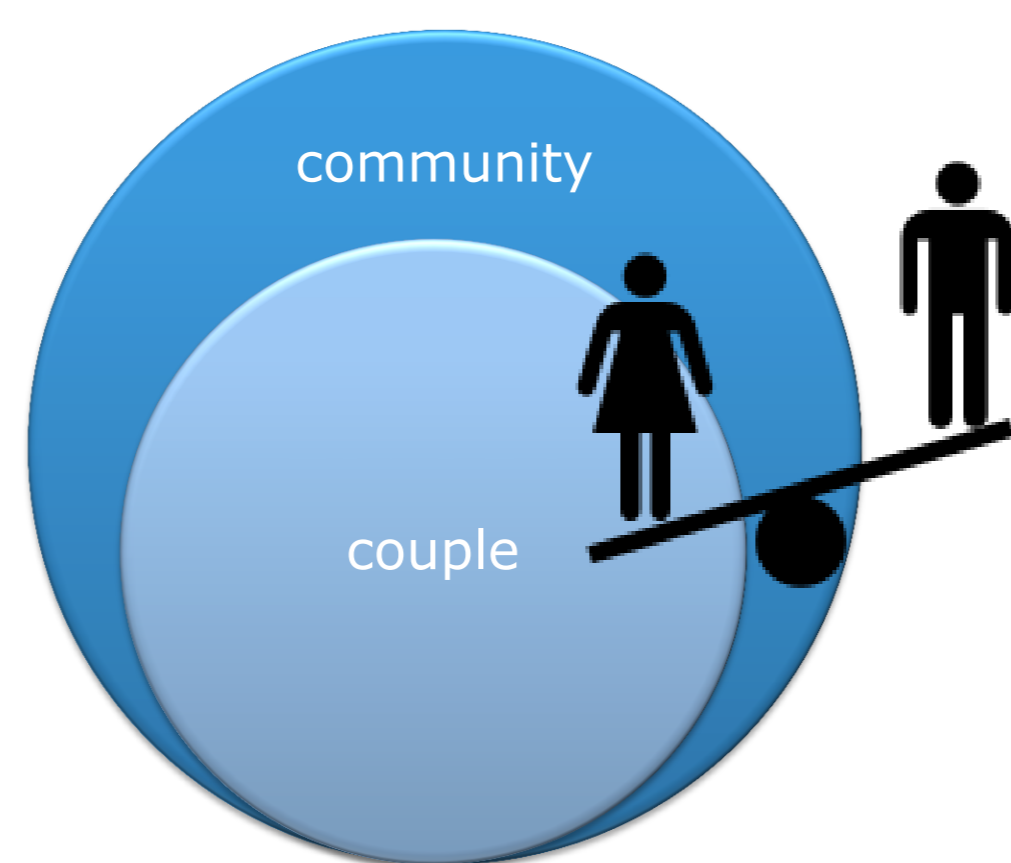


## Gender and population change

- Academic interest in gender as a factor in population change since the 1980s. Early work on effects of women's education and status (e.g. Mason 1986, 1987; Jejeebhoy 1995; Lloyd et al. 1999).
- 1990s: shift towards feminist perspectives focusing on women's empowerment (Kabeer 1999; Prata et al. 2017)
- Caveats:
  - Relatively few studies have addressed sub-Saharan Africa
  - Focus on women; exclusion of men and **gender-based power in couples**
  - Gender as a property of individuals rather than as a system of inequality
  - African male authority predicated on cultural rights negotiated at marriage  
→ attention needed to the **immediate contextual realm**

## This study

- 1. Gender dynamics:** power differentials in couples based on intra-household bargaining framework of Sen (1990):
  - 1) gendered division of labor
  - 2) access to and control over resources
  - 3) intra-household-decision-making
  - 4) norms
- 2. At household and community level**



**Figure 3.** Two-level (generalized) linear mixed regression estimates

	Unintended pregnancy		Unmet need		Age at first birth	
	Household	Community	Household	Community	Household	Community
	Coeff.	Sig.	Coeff.	Sig.	Coeff.	Sig.
<b>Educational differential</b>						
Husband higher educated	0.000	Ref	0.000	Ref	0.000	Ref
Wife higher educated	0.019	0.148	0.365	0.000	-0.019	0.155
Same years of education	-0.074	0.000	-0.944	0.000	-0.043	0.000
Educational differential unknown	-0.026	0.079	0.265	0.000	0.196	0.000
<b>Professional status differential</b>						
Both low professional status	0.000	Ref	0.000	Ref	0.000	Ref
Both high professional status	-0.330	0.000	-0.298	0.104	-0.417	0.000
Husband high, wife low prof.	-0.002	0.883	0.083	0.356	-0.100	0.000
Husband low, wife high prof.	-0.130	0.000	0.091	0.669	-0.273	0.000
Professional status diff unknown	0.006	0.775	-0.029	0.435	0.047	0.023
<b>Gender norms</b>						
Neutral gender preference	0.000	Ref	0.000	Ref	0.000	Ref
Boy preference	-0.016	0.101	0.258	0.000	-0.020	0.056
Girl preference	0.026	0.017	0.436	0.000	0.024	0.041
Gender preference unknown	-0.220	0.000	-0.008	0.844	-0.026	0.101
<b>Spousal age gap</b>						
Husband >=10 years older	-0.025	0.007	-0.406	0.000	-0.002	0.860
Husband 3-9 years older	0.000	Ref	0.000	Ref	0.000	Ref
Husband same age or wife older	0.007	0.546	0.326	0.000	-0.012	0.285
Spousal age difference unknown	0.236	0.000	-0.181	0.000	0.216	0.000
N women	614005		665583		581004	

Note: All models include control variables

## Data, measures, & methods

- **Data**
  - Global Data Lab: large data infrastructure of harmonized household surveys of developing countries. Selection: DHS's sub-Sahara Africa; 1992-2016
  - Analytical sample: women pregnant at time of survey or who gave birth in the 5 years prior to the survey: ca. 661,400 women in 2971 communities in 337 regions in 39 countries
- **Dependent variables**
  - Unintended pregnancy, unmet need, age at first birth
- **Key independent variables\***
  - Educational differential (access to and control over resources)
  - Professional status differential (gendered division of labor)
  - Spousal age difference (intra-household decision-making)
  - Gender preference (norms)
- **Controls:** country, year, age at first marriage\*, household wealth\*, remarried\*, household composition\*, urban\*

Note: \* = measured at household, and community levels

- **Methods:** Two-level (generalized) linear mixed regression. Households nested in communities; countries as fixed effects dummies

## Conclusion and discussion

- High impact on a range of fertility outcomes of **spousal educational equality** and **women's high professional status**, both at household and community levels. Community effects: synergistic and often strong(er) → **importance of context!**
- Gender norms and intra-household decision-making: results less clear. Community effects both synergistic and countervailing.
- Unmet need and unintended pregnancy are complex concepts: dependent on/indicative of calculus of individuals' conscious choice?
- Future research: For what groups do different dimensions of the gender context matter and in what ways? (context heterogeneity)

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